

The foregoing list does not set forth all types of positions, organizations, or fields that may be acceptable to satisfy the service obligation. Information regarding the process for obtaining a determination that employment as an officer on a U.S.-flag vessel is not available and approval for a specific ashore position may be obtained from the Office of Policy and Plans, Maritime Administration (MARAD), MAR-410, Compliance Specialist; 400 Seventh Street, SW, Room 7123, Washington, DC 20590.

### **REQUESTING A WAIVER**

The Federal Government realizes that there may be situations that prevent graduates from fulfilling the requirements of the service obligation contract. Waivers may be granted in cases where there would be undue hardship in the performance of satisfactory maritime service or when it is impossible to perform satisfactory maritime service due to an accident, illness or other justifiable reason as determined by the Maritime Administrator.

Applications for waivers of all or a portion of the service obligation may be obtained by writing the Compliance Specialist and must be submitted to the Maritime Administration as soon as the grounds for a waiver are known.

### **REQUESTING A DEFERMENT OF THE SERVICE OBLIGATION**

The Maritime Administration may grant, upon request, a deferment for a period not to exceed 2 years of all or part of the service obligation contract. This deferment privilege exists only for graduates considered to have superior academic and conduct records while at the USMMA or a State maritime academy. Deferments are available only to individuals desiring to enter a marine or maritime-related course of study at an accredited graduate school or to accept a scholarship of national significance, as determined by the Maritime Administrator, in a non-maritime related field.

Applications for determination shall be made through the Office of the Superintendent/President of the maritime academy, which shall forward each application to the Maritime Administration for review and approval. The application shall be accompanied by the Superintendent's/President's recommendation for approval or disapproval of graduate study and an evaluation of the applicant's academic/conduct records. Deferment request forms may be obtained from the Compliance Specialist.

### **ACTIVE MILITARY DUTY**

Active duty as a commissioned officer with the Navy or any other branch of the U.S. armed forces or the NOAA Corps is a way of satisfying the employment portion of the service obligation contract. Graduates of maritime academies have an understanding of naval procedures and operations that contribute to our national defense requirement for an adequate merchant marine, and can make a valuable contribution to the U.S. armed forces.

### **SERVICE WITH THE FEDERAL GOVERNMENT IN A MARITIME -RELATED POSITION THAT SERVES NATIONAL SECURITY**

A graduate may fulfill the employment portion of the commitment by serving in a full time position with a Federal agency if that position serves the national security of the United States in a maritime-related area. Positions with the Department of Homeland Security in the maritime sector are one example of acceptable Federal positions.

### **RESERVE MILITARY DUTY**

Graduates of maritime schools are required to support military operations in peace and war. That is why graduates of the USMMA and State maritime academies who have signed a service obligation contract are also required to apply for a commission in the U.S. Naval Reserve, the U.S. Coast Guard Reserve, or any other reserve unit of an armed force of the United States. If accepted, the graduate must remain in the military reserve for at least 6 years after graduation. Graduates serving five years of active duty in the U.S. armed forces have fulfilled this aspect of their MARAD service obligations.

### **BREACH OF SERVICE OBLIGATION AND RIGHT TO APPEAL**

Graduates who breach their service obligation contract may be ordered to active duty in the U.S. armed forces. In lieu of being ordered to active duty, graduates from the USMMA may be required to repay the cost of the education provided by the Federal Government. The Maritime Administration's Office of the Associate Administrator for Policy and International Trade will make a determination of whether a graduate has breached the service obligation. Such decisions may be appealed to the Maritime Administrator.

### **QUESTIONS AND FOR MORE INFORMATION:**

We want to help you succeed in meeting your service obligations. If you need more information or if you have questions regarding these obligations, please contact the Compliance Specialist at [marad.graduate@marad.dot.gov](mailto:marad.graduate@marad.dot.gov).



U.S. Department of Transportation  
MARITIME ADMINISTRATION

## **YOUR MARITIME SERVICE OBLIGATIONS**

Service Obligations of Federal and State  
Maritime Academy Graduates



This pamphlet includes information on the following topics:

Introduction

The Law: Maritime Education and Training Act of 1980

Service Obligations for Graduates

Service as a Merchant Marine Officer

Maritime-Related Employment Option

Requesting a Waiver

Requesting a Deferment of the Service Obligation

Active Military Duty

Reserve Military Duty

Breach of Service Obligation and Right To Appeal

## INTRODUCTION

When you graduate from the United States Merchant Marine Academy (USMMA) or a State maritime academy, you will have achieved a milestone in your academic career. The decision you made after high school to continue your education and to develop a technical competence in your chosen field of endeavor should benefit you for years to come.

Electing a maritime service obligation along with your career field is admirable. It is an honor to serve in the merchant marine since the merchant marine has been and remains the fourth arm of defense of this country. It is this nation's intention to have a sufficient number of highly trained licensed officers available to operate American flag vessels whether we are at peace or at war. Your service in the merchant marine is the vehicle through which this goal will be achieved.

The contents of this pamphlet, "Your Maritime Service Obligations", are intended to give you general guidance you may need to properly carry out the provisions of this maritime service obligation. Keep the pamphlet handy and refer to it often. Detailed information is contained in your service obligation contract and in the Code of Federal Regulations. See 46 C.F.R. Part 310.

## THE LAW

With the passage of the Maritime Education and Training Act of 1980, (P.L. 96-453), as amended (the "Act") Congress imposed the mandatory service obligations outlined below in this pamphlet. Pursuant to the requirements of this Act, each of you was required to enter into a service obligation contract.

## SERVICE OBLIGATIONS FOR GRADUATES

Service obligations related to a graduates' employment, maintenance of the Coast Guard license, commissioning in the reserve forces of the United States, and reporting to the Maritime Administration ("MARAD") are summarized as follows:

### Employment:

A graduate may fulfill the employment obligation portion of his/her service obligation in four ways as follows:

Serve in the foreign and domestic commerce and the national defense of the U.S. for at least five (5) years following graduation, if a graduate of USMMA or three (3)

years following graduation, if a graduate of a State maritime academy as:

- (1) a merchant marine officer in the U.S. flag fleet;
- (2) a commissioned officer on active duty in the U.S. Armed Forces or the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) Corps;
- (3) with the Federal Government in a maritime-related position that serves the national security interest; or
- (4) if a determination has been made that no afloat positions are available for you, ashore, in a U.S. maritime-related industry, profession or marine science.
- (5) By combination of the services specified above.

### Maintenance of Coast Guard License:

Maintain (or upgrade) the license as an officer in the U.S. merchant marine, including all endorsements held at graduation, for six (6) years following graduation;

### Service as a Commissioned Officer in the Reserves of the U.S. Armed Forces of the United States:

Apply for and accept, if tendered, an appointment as a commissioned officer in the reserves of the U.S. armed forces for at least six (6) years following graduation; and

### Report Compliance to MARAD:

Report to MARAD annually concerning your compliance with the foregoing maritime service obligations, as set forth in the next paragraph.

You are required to report to MARAD in each year following your year of graduation to inform us about your compliance with your service obligations. Regardless of the date of your graduation, each graduate must submit a service obligation report form between January 1<sup>st</sup> and March 1<sup>st</sup> starting the first January 1<sup>st</sup> after graduation and for at least an additional six (6) consecutive years thereafter. Graduates are required to file reports through to the last report that demonstrates that all obligations have been satisfied. If a graduate completes the service obligations within the six years following graduation, each graduate should only have to file a total of seven (7) reports in order to give information on all six (6) years of service obligations. Service obligation compliance report forms are provided with this pamphlet. Additional forms may be obtained by writing to the Office of Policy and Plans, Maritime Administration (MARAD), MAR-410,

Compliance Specialist, 400 Seventh Street, SW, Room 7123, Washington, DC 20590. Graduates are encouraged to obtain forms and report to MARAD using the web-based Internet system at <https://mscs.marad.dot.gov>.

## SERVICE AS A MERCHANT MARINE OFFICER

Unless a graduate serves as a commissioned officer in the U.S. armed forces or in the NOAA Corps or in a maritime-related position with the Federal Government serving the national security interests of the United States, he/she must first seek employment in the maritime industry as a licensed officer aboard vessels operating under U.S. flag. Employment aboard ships supports the government's objective of providing fully trained merchant marine officers to operate U.S.-flag merchant vessels in peace and war.

For service obligation purposes, a year of employment aboard merchant vessels is defined as the median number of days of seafaring employment under Articles achieved by deck or engine officers in the most recent calendar year for which statistics are available. The median number of days required for each year will be posted on MARAD's web-based Internet system at <https://mscs.marad.dot.gov>.

## MARITIME-RELATED ASHORE EMPLOYMENT OPTION

Graduates who are unable to obtain employment as a licensed officer aboard a U.S.-flag vessel may work in a U.S. maritime-related industry, profession, or marine science. Prior to accepting such a position, the graduate must seek a determination from the Maritime Administrator that such U.S.-flag vessel employment is not available. Additionally, the graduate must obtain approval of the position as meeting the maritime-related requirement. Among the areas of employment the Administrator may consider acceptable as U.S. maritime-related employment are positions of operational, management and administrative responsibility with organizations or maritime-related fields, such as:

- Steamship companies
- Stevedoring companies
- Vessel chartering and brokerage operations
- Cargo terminal operations
- Naval architecture
- Shipbuilding and repair
- Municipal and state port authorities
- Port development
- Marine engineering
- Tug and Barge companies
- Oil and mineral operations
- State agencies involved in maritime affairs